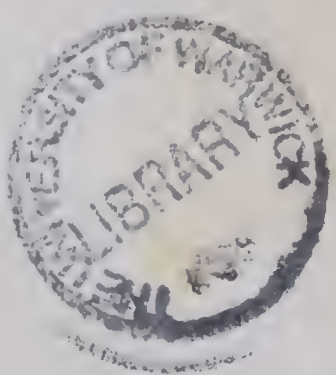
SOMERSET

M.

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF
WARWICK
LIBRARY

The Gift of
Mrs G. F. Hall



0024250

The Mistletoe Bough.

Lady Agnes. Now to elude their vigilance, and see who'll be the first to find me. My life on't, 'twill be my own dear Lovel!

Sir Reginald. [*Stabbing her.*] Death—not young Lovel—shall be the first to find thee!

Act I. Scene 5.

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH;

OR, YOUNG LOVEL'S BRIDE:

A LEGENDARY DRAMA,

In Two Acts,

BY C. A. SOMERSET,

Author of Shakspeare's Early Days, Sylvana, A Day after the Fair, "Yes," Crazy Jane, &c.

PRINTED FROM THE ACTING COPY, WITH REMARKS, BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL, BY D.—G.

To which are added,

A DESCRIPTION OF THE COSTUME,—CAST OF THE CHARACTERS,—ENTRANCES AND EXITS,—RELATIVE POSITIONS OF THE PERFORMERS ON THE STAGE, AND THE WHOLE OF THE STAGE BUSINESS,

As performed at the

METROPOLITAN MINOR THEATRES.

EMBELLISHED WITH A FINE ENGRAVING,

From a Drawing taken in the Theatre by Mr. R. Cruikshank.

LONDON:

JOHN CUMBERLAND, 2, CUMBERLAND TERRACE,

CAMDEN NEW TOWN.

REMARKS.

The Mistletoe Bough.

The magical properties of the Mistletoe are mentioned both by Virgil and Ovid; and Apuleius has preserved some verses of the poet Lelius, in which he mentions the mistletoe as one of the things necessary to make a man a magician. In the dark ages, a similar belief prevailed; and, even to the present day, the peasants of Holstein, and some other countries, call the mistletoe the "Spectre's Wand," from a supposition, that holding a branch of mistletoe in the hand will not only enable a man to see ghosts, but to force them to speak to him.

The mistletoe is peculiar to Christmas, a season spent by our ancestors with great festivity.

> "Christmas comes but once a year,
> So let us all be merry!"

was an injunction obeyed with pertinacious jollity. It was the sacred anniversary of a glorious advent; all hearts were touched with fervid love and piety; even superstition borrowed a grace from its affecting and solemn recollections.

> "Some say, that ever 'gainst that season comes,
> Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
> This bird of dawning singeth all night long:
> And then, they say, no spirit walks abroad,
> The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
> No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
> So hallow'd and so gracious is the time."

There was once hospitality in merry England. The fine old English gentleman, at the opening of this joyful festival, had all his tenants and neighbours assembled in his hall by daybreak; the strong beer was broached; the black-jacks went plentifully about with toast, sugar, and nutmeg; the rooms were embowered with holly, ivy, cypress, bays, laurel, and mistletoe; a bouncing Christmas log was placed in the chimney, glowing like the cheeks of a country milkmaid; the rustics were running here and there, with merry hearts and jolly faces; the lasses were as blythe and buxom as the maids of honour in Queen Bess's days, when sirloins of roast beef, and flaggons of jolly good ale and old, tickled their delicate appetites at breakfast. Then would Peg scuttle about to make a toast for John, while Tom would run harum-scarum to draw a jug of ale for Margery. In those times, all the spits were sparkling; the Hackin must be boiled by daybreak, or else two young men must take the maiden by the arms, and run her round the market-place, till she is ashamed of her laziness. Then was a day of pleasure for rich and poor; the tables groaned under beef, minced pies, plum-porridge, turkeys, geese, and plum-puddings; and every one who had sharp knives and sharper appetites cut and came again, which gave rise to the ancient proverb, "'Tis merry in hall, when beards wag all!"

Christmas being the season when Jack Frost commonly takes us by the nose, the diversions are within doors, elther in exercise, or by the fireside. Then comes mumming and masquerading, when the squire's wardrobe is ransacked for dresses of all kinds, and corks are burnt to blacken faces, or make deputy mustachios;—then begins the freedom which knows no distinction—every one shows his wit according to his capacity; and then a dance again, and a hearty good pull or two at the silver tankard of strong beer, well seasoned with sugar and nutmeg;—then a game at Blind Man's Buff—Puss in the Corner—Questions and Commands—Hoop and Hide—stories of hobgoblins, raw-heads, and bloody-bones—Buggy-Bows—Tom-Pokers—Bull-Beggars—witches, wizards, conjurors, Doctor Faustus, Friar Bacon, Doctor Partridge, and such like horrible bodies, that terrify and delight round about a coal-fire at Christmas.

Nor was this joyful festival complete without its ancient insignia of "The Boar's Head;" which, preceded with much state by the Master of the Revels, and followed by choristers and minstrels, singing and playing compositions in its honour, was borne into the great hall of the inner temple upon a silver platter. So important was the office of Boar's Head Bearer considered to be, that, in 1170, Hollingshed has chronicled the circumstance of King Henry the Second bringing up to the table of his son, the young prince, a boar's head, with trumpeters going before him. Dekker, speaking of persons apprehensive of catching the plague, says, "They went (most bitterly) miching and muffled up and down, with rue and wormwood stuft into their eares and nostrils, looking like so many bore's head, stuck with branches of rosemary, to be served in for brawne at Christmas."—We conclude our brief notice with an ancient song from a homely and amusing chronicle *(rarissimus!)* of Christmas gambols:—

"O you merry, merry souls,
Christmas is a coming;
We shall have flowing bowls,
Dancing, piping, drumming.
Delicate minced pies,
To feast ev'ry virgin;
Capon and goose likewise,
Brawn and dish of sturgeon.

Then, for your Christmas-box,
Sweet plum-cake and money;
Delicate Holland smocks,
Kisses sweet as honey.
I for the Christmas Ball,
Where we will be jolly;
Coupling short and tall,
Kate, Dick, Ralph, and Molly.

To the Hop we'll go,
Where we'll jig and caper;
Cuckolds all a row,—
Will shall pay the scraper:
Tom must dance with Sue,
Keeping time with kisses;
We'll have a jovial crew
Of sweet smirking Misses."

A story in Rogers's "Italy" produced the ballad upon which this drama is founded. 'Tis of a noble Italian lady, Ginevra, who, having on her wedding-day, at the bridal feast, left Francesco,

" Laughing, and looking back, and flying still,
Her ivory tooth imprinted on his finger,"

was, after a strict search, no where to be found. Her husband, in despair, flew to Venice, and lost his life "in battle with the Turk." Her father passed the sad remnant of his days,

" Wandering in quest of something,—
Something he could not find,"

and died; and the house, after having remained awhile

" Silent and tenantless, then went to strangers."

The sequel is best told in the language of the poet:—

" Full fifty years were past, and all forgot,
When on an idle day, a day of search
Mid the old lumber in the gallery,
That mouldering chest was noticed; and 'twas said
By one as young, as thoughtless as Ginevra,
'Why not remove it from its lurking-place?'
'Twas done as soon as said; but on the way
It burst, it fell; and lo, a skeleton,
With here and there a pearl, an emerald-stone,
A golden clasp, clasping a shred of gold:
All else had perished—save a nuptial ring,
And a small seal, her mother's legacy,
Engraven with a name, the name of both,
'Ginevra!'————
There then had she found a grave!
Within that chest she had concealed herself,
Fluttering with joy, the happiest of the happy;
When a spring-lock, that lay in ambush there,
Fastened her down for ever!"

Mr. Somerset, seeing the dramatic impossibility of confining himself to this single incident, has amplified the story, by introducing a variety of characters; the most prominent of which is a Goblin Page, a dwarfish, deformed, malignant imp of mischief. The lady dies, not by her own youthful frolic, but the vengeance of a rejected lover, who, after she has got into the chest, stabs her, and closes the lid.—His treachery meets with retribution. The spirit of his victim stands forth as his accuser; and, in a paroxysm of shame, remorse, and despair, he plants a dagger in his heart. All, however, is not tragedy. Mr. Crotchet, an egotistical dancing-master, makes considerable fun; which is kept up by his coadjutors, Messrs. Quick and Slow, whose names are sufficiently expressive. There are also some merry doings for the celebration of Christmas, under the auspices of a jovial old baron, which, in conjunction with the title of the drama, sanction our preliminary notice of the wassailing and revelry of that sacred festival.

This piece was a great favourite at the Garrick theatre, where it was repeatedly and efficiently played to crowded audiences.

☞ D.——G.

Cast of the Characters,

As performed at the Garrick Theatre, 1834.

Baron de Clifford	Mr. Osborne.
Sir Henry Lovel	Mr. Griffiths.
Sir Reginald de Courcy	Mr. Chaplin.
Kobo (his Goblin Page)	Master Smithson.
Carolus Crotchet (Music-Master to Lady Agnes)	Mr. W. West.
Quick } *Domestics of the Baron*	Mr. Santer.
Slow }	Mr. Poole.
Lady Agnes	Miss Chaplin.
Dame Winnifred (her Nurse)	Mrs. Pierce.
Maud (Maid to Lady Agnes)	Miss Fosryth.

Huntsmen, Domestics, Vassals, &c.

Costume.

BARON DE CLIFFORD. — *First dress:* Green cloth jacket, trunks, and hose—russet boots—green velvet cap. *Second dress:* Puce-coloured velvet jacket, trunks, belt, and mantle, with white silk puffs—white silk hose—drab shoes, with white rosettes—ruff, sword, and jewels. *Third dress:* Black doublet, trunks, and hose, slashed with black silk—black cloak, and staff.

SIR HENRY LOVEL.—*First dress:* Elegant green velvet hunting suit, with spear, &c.—*Second dress:* White satin jacket, slashed with pink satin—white silk hose, shoes, and rosettes—white hat and ostrich feathers. *Third dress:* Chain armour—steel helmet—black feathers—order, sword, &c.

SIR REGINALD DE COURCY.—Scarlet cloth jacket, trunks, belt, and mantle—black hat and feathers—sword, &c.

KOBO.— Scarlet satin tunic and trunks—white silk hose—red shoes—cap and feather.

CAROLUS CROTCHET. — *First dress:* Straw-coloured jacket, trunks, and hose. *Second dress:* Morone-coloured shirt—fleshings—sandals—mantle and cross—sword, &c.

QUICK.—Red doublet, trunks, and hose.

SLOW.—Blue ditto.

LADY AGNES.—Elegant bridal dress of white satin, embroidered with silver point-lace collar—silk scarf—wreath of roses—stomacher, jewels, &c.

DAME WINNIFRED. — Brown jacket and petticoat, trimmed with red binding.

MAUD. — *First dress:* Crimson jacket—blue petticoat, trimmed with black binding—muslin collar. *Second dress:* Light-blue tunic, trunks, and hose—black velvet cap. *Third dress:* Blue boddice—black petticoat—cap to match.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

The Conductors of this Work print no Plays but those which they have seen acted. The *Stage Directions* are given from personal observations, during the most recent performances.

R. means *Right;* L. *Left;* C. *Centre;* R. C. *Right of Centre;* L. C. *Left of Centre;* D. F. *Door in the Flat,* or Scene running across the back of the Stage; C. D. F. *Centre Door in the Flat;* R. D. F. *Right Door in the Flat;* L. D. F. *Left Door in the Flat;* R. D. *Right Door;* L. D. *Left Door;* S. E. *Second Entrance;* U. E. *Upper Entrance.*

*** *The Reader is supposed to be on the Stage, facing the Audience.*

THE MISTLETOE BOUGH.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Park and Castle of the Baron de Clifford—iron gates,* C. F.—*the castle,* R.

MUSIC. — *Enter* SOLOMON SLOW *and* CALEB QUICK *through the gates,* C. F.—*they hold a scroll of music, and attempt to sing the following*

SERENADE.

AIR—"*Pray, Goody.*"

Slow. [*Drawling.*] Sweet lady, ope those lovely eyes, nor longer court repose,
But let thy beauty ev'ry bosom cheer;
And shame with thy complexion's hue the lily and the rose,
Who'll hide their heads the moment you appear.

Quick. [*Interrupting him.*] Nothing like it, brother Slow—too drawling by half. Only hear me.

[*Sings rapidly.*

Sweet lady, ope those lovely eyes, nor longer court repose,
But let thy beauty ev'ry bosom cheer——"

Slow. [*Stopping him.*] Shame on thee, thou unmusical stockfish! to think of terrifying her young ladyship from her morning slumbers, by attempting to chant with that cracked old warming-pan of a voice of thine! Out upon thee!

Quick. Bridle thy tongue, or I shall most assuredly become pugnacious, and smite thee sorely!

Slow. Pugnacious, indeed!—Psha! pug or puppy dog, I care not that for thee! [*Snaps his fingers at him.*

Enter MAGISTER CAROLUS CROTCHET, *in a passion,* R.

Cro. Odds sharps! flats and naturals! what means all this discord among those who ought to be the children of harmony? Speak, ye murderers—ye base assassinators of thorough bass! what means this altercation?

Quick. Really, Mr. Crotchet, it's no fault of mine; for that tardy fellow, Slow, sings out of all tune, and will not mind G sharp.

Slow. And Quick, believe me, is a regular flat.

Cro. [*Beating them off with a scroll of music.*] Get ye gone, ye unharmonious knaves! fly! presto prestissimo! [*Exeunt Quick and Slow through the gates,* C. F.] Was ever votary of the divine science of music—the language of the gods, so bored with a couple of insensible blockheads? Here have I been drilling the rascals six months and more for the birthday festival of the lovely Lady Agnes, and yet they are as unharmonious as peacocks!—And I, unfortunately, like many of our prima dons and donnas, when wanted to sing, have suddenly taken cold, and am as hoarse as a raven. What's to be done? Why, I'll do my best—the best can do no better.

SERENADE.—CROTCHET.

Sweet lady, ope those lovely eyes, nor longer court repose,
But let thy beauty ev'ry bosom cheer;
And shame with thy complexion's hue the lily and the rose,
Who'll hide their heads the moment you appear.

Enter LADY AGNES *from the castle,* R.

Agn. Thanks—ten thousand thanks, good Master Crotchet, for your beautiful serenade! I knew you to be an able professor of my favourite science, but had no idea you were so excellent a singer.

Cro. Bless your ladyship! you have no notion of the extent of my genius;—but if the serenade hath given you satisfaction, I am content.

Agn. Satisfaction!—Much more: it hath delighted me; and if ever the glorious sun shone propitiously on a maiden's birth and nuptial morn, I might, indeed, deem myself happy. [*Sighing.*] But I have been troubled with a fearful dream.

Cro. A dream!—Oh, suffer not an idle vision to rob you of substantial happiness!

Agn. And yet it haunts me like some ghastly spectre.

Cro. Confound the spectres!—We'll get the parson to banish those blue devils, and lay them in the Red Sea.

Agn. Have with thee, Master Crotchet!—Thou art not only a merry soul thyself, but the cause of mirthfulness in others. So I'll e'en take thy good counsel—forget my dream, if possible, and be as cheerful and as gay as——

Cro. Innocence and beauty have a right to be. Success! So come along, my dear young pupil; the holyday sports will soon commence and our presence will be indispensable.

Agn. Whither so hastily, good Master Crotchet? A bride without a bridegroom were, methinks, a sorry damsel. Where is my dear Sir Lovel?

Cro. Gone forth, by command of his lordship, your father, to hunt in the forest.

Agn. Go we also, good Master Crotchet. On our way, who knows but we may meet the gallant Nimrods?

Cro. Not to the forest, but the music-room, to practise my immortal composition, just finished, in three flats. Such counterpoint!—Oh!

Agn. E'en as you please;—you are my master until I wed, and get another.

Cro. Apollo's self had never such a pupil! Life is a concert, rich in sweet melody, though sometimes jarred by the harsh discords of contending passions;—yet, if at last these discords be dissolved into one happy strain of harmony, let us be thankful to the great Composer, and tune our hearts to innocence and joy!

[*Exeunt into the castle*, R.

HUNTING MUSIC.—*Enter the* BARON DE CLIFFORD, L., *followed by* QUICK, SLOW, *and other Domestics.*

Baron. Now, by Diana! a merry chase will drive the sluggish blood like lightning through the veins! My future son-in-law, the young Sir Lovel, is in the sportive as in the battle-field, a very hero;—for what else is the chase but battle's emblem? Hunting the wild boar, the gaunt and hungry wolf, or leaping o'er a precipice to seize the mountain deer. Oh! 'tis royal sport, worthy a Cæsar or an Alexander! Hark ye, knaves: fly instantly, and bid the cook prepare the venison dinner. [*Exeunt Slow, Quick, and Domestics, into the castle*, R.] Never in my life did I feel so joyously disposed as I do on this happy morn—the birth and nuptial day of my only child, my dear Agnes; who will be wedded to as brave a youth as ever drew the sword of chivalry in honour's sacred cause. Ha! he comes!

MUSIC.—*Enter* SIR HENRY LOVEL, *in an elegant hunting dress, spear, &c.* L.

Lovel. [*Speaking off*, L.] Look that the order I have given you be scrupulously followed. I'll protect, and stand between you and the baron's anger. [*Advancing to* C.] Ah! my good Lord de Clifford here before me!—Now, by St. George! gray hairs have won the prize!

Baron. Yes;—the joy I feel that my darling child will this day blend her destiny with a youth so brave, so worthy as Sir Henry Lovel, hath taken from me a score of years at least, and made me young again.

Lovel. Your commendation, and my dear Agnes' love, exalt me to a height of happiness seldom, if ever, reached by mortal man. Yet must I now apologise, my lord, for the unbounded freedom I have used——

Baron. He who is unrestrained may freely act. All I possess, for Agnes' sake, is thine. Why, then, apologise?

Lovel. In courtesy, my lord, and not through fear. I have ordered that the game we've killed this morn, except one haunch of venison for yourself, be given to the poor. 'Tis Christmas time; and while we, in the splendid banquet chamber, partake of the good this life affords—quaff ruby wine, and sing the song of joy, 'twould mar my happiness to know the needy were not partakers of Heaven's bounty. Let the widow and the orphan share our hospitality without reserve, and Lovel and his bride will then be blessed.

Baron. Bravo, my boy! Thy noble sentiments so tally with my own, that I respect thee for them a thousand times the more. The poor shall be regaled with true old English hospitality; and while old age sits in the easy chair, to view the sports and pastimes of their youth——

Lovel. We youngsters will enjoy the merry dance, and, beneath the bough of mistletoe, kiss beauty's cheek until the morning dawns.

Baron. We will—we will, my boy!—that is, you will. I had almost forgotten that my dancing days were over.—But never mind; for, although the plaguy gout mars my agility, my heart is still as young as ever. Come, let's to the banquet.

Lovel. Say, rather, to the altar; there, with my dear Agnes, in wedlock's bonds, join heart and hand for ever, and tie the knot which death alone can sever! Come, my good lord. [*Music.—Exeunt into the castle*, R.

Enter Sir Reginald de Courcy, C. F., *attended by* Kobo, *who listens to the festive music in the castle with wild and malevolent joy.*

Sir R. Curse on those sounds! they are the kneel to my fondest hopes! This day the lovely Agnes weds my detested rival, young Sir Lovel. 'Twas he that supplanted

me in love, thrice unhorsed me at the tournament in the royal presence, and from fair Agnes' hand received the prize. Perdition light on him! and may his joy be blasted ere it reach maturity! But if hell can plot, I'll have my full revenge!

Kobo. Hark, master! they are merry: shall I fire the castle, and destroy them?

Sir R. Thou'rt a malicious imp, and ripe for mischief; the offspring of a withered sorceress, born in the Saracen camp; thou hatest all who bear the Christian name!

Kobo. All, save your lordship;—but you are no Christian: you hate your enemy even unto death, as I do!—Pr'ythee, let me fire the castle; 'twould make a glorious bonfire! [*Laughing.*] Ha! ha! ha!

Sir R. Thy rashness, imp, would prove thy master's ruin. Yonder fair castle, and its vast domains, will one day become mine!—I shall live to see the proud De Clifford wander a vagrant—a beggar through the world! He is my debtor, and cannot pay me;—he shall turn out, and the rejected Reginald de Courcy triumph in his fall!

Kobo. [*Peeping in at the castle window.*] Look, my lord, there stands the bride—the lovely Lady Agnes. She is, indeed, a peerless damsel!

Sir R. Oh, name her not, Kobo! There was a time, indeed, ere she beheld young Lovel, that I dreamed her heart was mine; but 'twas delusion. Nature's most lovely yet capricious work is woman! Set thy foot upon the water—'tis firm as adamant to woman's will! Tell all thy secrets to the babbling wind—'tis silent as the grave compared to woman's tongue! The butterfly, that wantons all day long from flower to flower, hath more stability than woman, who smiles and yet deceives!

Kobo. Why, then, pursue the damsel, my good lord?—In beauty's garden there are many flowers, as fair—nay, fairer, than the Lady Agnes.

Sir R. Hadst thou an eye of vision sharp enough to penetrate the surface of my seeming, thou'dst clearly see my motive. 'Tis revenge! the only food despair can feed upon;—deep, deadly, dire revenge!

Kobo. For that, most noble sir, I worship thee!

Sir R. I should joy to see the lovely Agnes a lifeless corpse, extended at my feet!

Kobo. [*Drawing a dagger.*] She dies, my lord!

Sir R. [*Arresting his arm.*] My joy were incomplete, if any hand but mine should strike the deadly blow.—

Therefore, to action, Kobo;—knock at the castle gate, and demand admission. Once mingling with the gay and happy throng, we'll turn their feast of joy to direst sorrow!

[*Music.—Kobo knocks loudly at the castle gate,* R.

Enter SOLOMON SLOW *from the castle,* R.

Slow. [*Starting at the sight of the Goblin Page.*] The saints preserve us from the evil one!

Sir R. Announce me to thy master;—say, Sir Reginald de Courcy demands an audience.

Slow. Leave but that imp of Beelzebub behind, and you, my lord, are welcome.

Kobo. [*Lancing him with his dagger.*] Take that, and that, for thy unmannered speech! How dost thou like it, eh?

Slow. Holy St. George! defend me from this dragon!

Sir R. Hence, slave, and do my bidding!

[*Music.—Sir Reginald stamps furiously—Slow, in great alarm, ushers him into the castle, followed by Kobo.*

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter SIR HENRY LOVEL, LADY AGNES, *and the* BARON DE CLIFFORD, L.

Lovel. (R. C.) Nay, dearest Agnes, suffer not a dream—an idle vision, like an envious cloud, to veil the sunshine of as sweet a face as ever beamed with pleasure.

Agn. (C.) I must impart my dream, and then, mayhap, my heart, being lightened of its heavy load, will bound again with joy.

Baron. (L. C.) Well, child, thy dream—thy dream!

Agn. Methought I wandered forth, I knew not whither, and found myself alone in the forest. The moon, which lit my steps, became suddenly obscured; and in my haste to gain the castle, I fell into a deep abyss. My cries were echoed back in vain; no one approached to rescue me—not even you, my own dear Lovel, nor my beloved father. The harrowing thought of dying there alone seized on my brain, drove me to distraction, and I perished, bereft of heaven's and of reason's light! Oh, horrible! methought 'twas my dreadful destiny to be buried in a living tomb!

Lovel. Banish this melancholy, dearest love. The vil-

lage grandams say, that dreams should ever be interpreted by contrarieties; — that visions of death portend long life —of fear, that you will be supported by hope; and to dream of sorrow, a sign of unbounded joy. Hence, then, with care, and let rich happiness speak through thine eyes the transport of a heart, where innocence and virtue love to dwell.

Agn. I will—I will be happy, despite my fearful dream. [*Sighing deeply.*] Yes, yes—I will be cheerful!

Baron. [*Aside.*] I have my forebodings, yet I must disguise my feelings. [*To Agnes.*] Come, my child, dismiss these gloomy fears, and be gay and light of heart as thy aged father [*Festive music without.*] Our guests assemble in the banquet-hall; then haste we, with a kind and hearty welcome, to meet and greet their coming.

MUSIC.—*Enter* SLOW, L. S. E., *introducing* SIR REGINALD DE COURCY, *followed by* KOBO.

Agn. [*Screaming, and clinging to Sir Lovel, on perceiving Sir Reginald.*] Ha! save me!—A form like that, in my fatal dream, did hover o'er me in the dread abyss, mocking my anguish, and refusing aid! Oh! save me—save me, Lovel!

Lovel. A raven flits across our path, my love; yet tremble not: thy Henry will protect thee, e'en at the hazard of ten thousand lives!

Baron. [*To Slow.*] Retire, and entertain his lordship's page in the servants' hall.

Slow. I will, my lord—[*Aside.*]—with a plate of red hot charcoal, and a basin of brimstone porridge. [*Kobo shows his dagger.*] Oh, holy St. Dominick! defend us!

[*Exit*, L., *followed by Kobo, threatening him.*

Baron. Sir Reginald, we have open house to-day; and if you come in friendship, you are welcome.

Sir R. Friendship!—A stronger motive brings me hither: 'tis love—the love I bear your fair daughter, the Lady Agnes.

Agn. Love!—Oh! never—never!

Sir R. In love, lady, the heart is free: you cannot control my fond affections, nor I yours;—but where true love is hastily and unfeelingly rejected, it turns to bitterest gall —to deadliest poison!

Lovel. Who dare dispute my claim to Agnes' love? If

such there be, let him stand forth, and boldly, with my sword, I'll answer him! We have met ere now, Sir Reginald. At the tournament, in the royal presence, I made thee bite the dust: have a care, lest I repeat the lesson I have given ye!

Sir R. Audacious boy! this language to my face!

Lovel. Behind your back, my lord, you might assert 'twere calumny.

Agn. Your love, Sir Reginald, I ne'er encouraged;—then why persecute me thus?

Baron. [*To De Courcy.*] Wherefore do you persevere, and mar our happiness on this joyous day? Resign the maid, my lord, and let's be friends.

Lovel. Aye, yield your claim, most noble Reginald, to him who wooed and won the lovely Agnes, which you could never do!

Sir R. Insolent stripling!—For thy unmannered jeering, from this hand take thy reward—[*Drawing a dirk.*] This dagger to thy heart!

[*Chord.—Sir Reginald rushes towards Sir Lovel, and attempts to stab him, but is prevented by the Baron and Agnes.*

Baron. Hold!—Sir Reginald, you see you are rejected; still, if you will remain our guest, you are most welcome; if not, depart in peace. What say you? In a word, shall we be friends?

Sir R. On one condition: you are my debtor in ten thousand marks;—pay me the money, and I will retire.

Baron. Impossible! unless I rob my daughter of her dowry.

Lovel. Perish the bauble, fortune! Rich in love, we ask no more. Therefore, most noble sir, I pray you pay the money instantly to the kind, generous De Courcy!

Baron. In coin I cannot; yet my vast domains will I mortgage to his lordship for the debt; and if in ten years they be not redeemed, the whole shall devolve on him.

Sir R. Agreed! [*Aside.*] The happiness of seeing them all beggars will then, at least, be mine. [*To the Baron.*] Your hand, my lord. [*They shake hands.*] I take your proffered friendship, and yield all claim to your fair daughter's hand to my more favoured rival. [*Aside.*] For this rejection I will have full revenge!

[*Festive Music without.—Exeunt*, L.

SCENE III.—*The Banquetting Hall, furnished for the nuptial festivities, and hung with holly, ivy, &c.—a large mistletoe bough suspended from the ceiling,* c.

Festive Music.—*Enter* Crotchet, c., *as Master of the Ceremonies, ushering in the noble guests—the* Baron de Clifford, Lady Agnes, Sir Henry Lovel, Dame Winnifred, *and* Maud—Sir Reginald de Courcy, *aloof, follows with* Kobo, *and regards the happiness of all present with a malignant eye of jealousy.*

Cro. Make way there for the noble company!

Baron. [*Leading Agnes and Sir Lovel forward.*] Agnes and Henry, on this auspicious morn, receive an aged, happy father's blessing!

[*Music.—They kneel, and the Baron gives them his paternal benediction.*

Dame. Ay, marry, and my blessing, too; for had it not been for me, Dame Winnifred, who nursed her young ladyship when her poor dear mother died, she ne'er had lived to see this happy day. So bless thee—bless thee, my child! [*Kisses her.*

Sir R. [*Aside.*] Perdition light on ye!—Such scenes to me, where the heart opens and expands with love, are as a glimpse of heaven to the damned!

Kobo. [*Apart to Sir Reginald.*] Do let me fire the castle, good my lord, and burn them all!

Sir R. [*Apart to him.*] Peace, imp! nor mar, through thy impatience, my revenge!

Lovel. Dear Agnes, see—the bough of mistletoe invites, beneath its sacred shade, to taste from beauty's ruby lip the kiss of love;—lose we no time.

Cro. Minstrels, strike up! The composition's mine—Magister Crotchet's; pray remember that, and render homage to my genius!

FESTIVE BALLET.

[*The company waltz round the hall, and as the couples pass under the mistletoe bough, each chevalier unbonnets, and salutes his lady.—When the first part of the ballet is over, Crotchet advances, and begins, with some slight variations, the popular ballad of*

"THE MISTLETOE BOUGH."

ROMANCE & CHORUS.—CROTCHET, AGNES, *and* LOVEL.

Crotchet. The mistletoe hangs in the castle hall,
The holly-branch shines on the old oak wall;
And the baron's retainers, so blythe and gay,
Are keeping their Christmas holiday.
The baron beholds with a father's pride
His beautiful child, young Lovel's bride;
While she, with her bright eyes, seems to be
The star of the goodly company.
Oh, the mistletoe bough!—Oh, the mistletoe bough!

Chorus. Oh, the mistletoe bough, &c.

Agnes & Crotchet. I'm / She's } weary of dancing; { thy / his } happy bride,
Pray tarry a moment, will hide—will hide.
But, Lovel, be sure thou'rt the first to trace
The clue to { my / her } secret lurking place.

Lovel & Crotchet. Rely on it, { dearest, / lady, } I'll / he'll } be the first man
Each tower to search, and each nook to scan;
And soon will { I / he } trace thee to where thou dost hide,
For { I'm / he's } weary without thee, { my / his } own dear bride!
Oh, the mistletoe bough!—Oh, the mistletoe bough!

Chorus. Oh, the mistletoe bough, &c.

[*The Ballet is resumed—as the company waltz round, Agnes runs off,* R. S. E., *to hide herself—she is watched and followed by Sir Reginald de Courcy.*

Baron. She's gone to hide, and thinks she will elude us. Now, friends, disperse yourselves in all directions: the game you hunt is richly worth the chase.

Lovel. I dare an Argus, with his hundred eyes, to outdo me in love's sharp scrutiny. My life on't, I am the first to find her!

[*Music.—Exeunt, cautiously,* R. *and* L.—*Kobo, being left by himself, introduces some comic business—views himself in a looking-glass, and tastes the wine, which exhilirates him—he dances extravagantly, and capers off, mysteriously,* C.

SCENE IV.—*An Apartment in the Castle.*

PIZZICATO MUSIC.—*Enter the* LADY AGNES, *on tiptoe,* R., *followed, unperceived, by* SIR REGINALD DE COURCY.

Agn. I've got the start of them! Now, let me see—where shall I hide myself? Ah! I have it: in the old

oak chest, in the castle armoury ;—they'll never think of searching for me there. [*Exit, cautiously*, L.

Sir R. Unthinking girl ! soon shall thy sport be changed to bitter earnest ! To the castle armoury I'll follow thee, and consummate my terrible revenge !

[*Music.—He draws his dagger, and exits*, L.

Enter CROTCHET, *warily*, R., *followed by* DAME WINNIFRED, MAUD, QUICK, *and* SLOW, *searching about.*

Cro. Hush ! hush !—Now where do you suppose her young ladyship may have concealed herself ?

Dame. In the cherry-brandy closet ; for, I'm sure, that would be my hiding-place.

Maud. Or in the old ruinous tower, which, they say, is haunted by a ghost.

Slow. Or in the cellar, among the wine-bottles.

Quick. Or in the music-room, among the sharps and flats.

Cro. Or in the servants' hall, among the naturals.—[*Laughing.*] Ha ! ha ! ha !

Enter the BARON DE CLIFFORD *and* SIR HENRY LOVEL, R.

Baron. Search away, ye idle knaves !—Begone, I say ! [*Drives them off*, L.

Lovel. The deer, by this time, has gained her covert.

Baron. Fear not, my boy ; we'll soon discover her.

Enter KOBO, *mysteriously*, R.

Lovel. [*Aside.*] That imp of darkness here ! [*To Kobo.*] Where is thy master ?

Kobo. I know not, unless he's with the Lady Agnes. [*Aside.*] Where'er he is, I hope he's doing mischief ; we shall have no fun without it.

Lovel. [*Aside.*] Can he have followed Agnes ? Ah ! that thought maddens my brain ! [*To the Baron.*] This sport must have an end. Away, my lord ! something whispers me that Agnes is in danger, and needs protection !

[*Exeunt Sir Henry Lovel and the Baron, hurriedly*, L.

Kobo. How the fools rave about after a woman !—[*Laughing hideously.*] Ho ! ho ! ho ! The Lady Agnes leads them a pretty dance. Sir Reginald has his eye on her ; and I'm no goblin page if my master doesn't raise a storm, that will end the night in a tornado. So, while the wind is up, I'll lend a hand, and help to fan the breeze !

[*Exit, eagerly*, L.

SCENE V. — *The Castle Armoury—banners displayed against the walls and pillars—a sliding panel at the back*, R. C. F.—*a large old oak chest near it.*

MUSIC.—*Enter* SIR REGINALD DE COURCY *through the sliding panel.*

Sir R. Thus, through this secret passage, have I gained the armoury before my destined prey. Ha! here stands the old oak chest! [*Examining it.*] It shuts, I see, with a spring-lock; — that's fortunate! Hark! my victim comes! I must to ambush!

[*Exit through the secret panel*, R. C. F.

Enter the LADY AGNES, *hastily*, R. S. E.

Agn. [*Looking cautiously around, and opening the chest.*] Now to elude their vigilance, and see who'll be the first to find me. [*Getting into the chest—her scarf falls accidentally from her shoulders.*] My life on't, 'twill be my own dear Lovel!

CHORD.—*Re-enter* SIR REGINALD *from the secret panel.*

Sir R. [*Seizing the lid of the chest, and stabbing her.*] Death—not young Lovel—shall be the first to find thee! [*Closing the chest.*] This is, indeed, revenge! [*Laughing triumphantly.*] Ha! ha! ha!

Agn. [*Faintly.*] Help, Lovel!—Father, help!—I faint —I die! Oh! oh!

Sir R. [*Still holding down the lid of the chest.*] Thus perishes the haughty Lady Agnes! The lock is fast: I could not, if I would, re-open the trunk;—yet 'tis a pity that so fair a flower should wither in its bloom. Shall I alarm the castle, and demand the key? Dolt that I am! they'd brand me murderer! [*Footsteps heard without*, R.] I must away; and, luckily, this scarf, which she has dropped, will remove all suspicion.

[*Exit, hastily, with the scarf*, L. U. E.

Enter the BARON DE CLIFFORD, SIR HENRY LOVEL, CROTCHET, *and Domestics, hastily*, R. S. E.

Lovel. [*In an agony of despair.*] Oh, my good lord! where can my Agnes be concealed? I've sought her in the highest, the lowest spot; but I've searched in vain!

Baron. [*To the Domestics.*] Examine my domains around; let not a spot escape your vigilance. Away!

[*They are hurrying off* R. *and* L.

Re-enter SIR REGINALD DE COURCY, *suddenly*, L. U. E., *with the scarf of the Lady Agnes.*

Sir R. Your search is useless. Beneath yonder balcony there rolls a rapid torrent. on whose brink, hanging on a projecting rock, I found this scarf, which, alas! too plainly portends your daughter's fate.

Lovel. My Agnes drowned!—Oh! horrible! [*Turning to Sir Reginald.*] 'Tis false!—Yet will I seek her e'en in the foaming waves! [*Rushes off, distractedly*, L.

Baron. [*Wringing his hands.*] My child! oh! my darling child!

[*Music.—Tableau of sorrow and despair—Sir Reginald, holding up the scarf, regards the afflicted group with demoniac triumph.*

END OF ACT I.

☞ *A period of ten years is supposed to have elapsed between the acts.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Servants' Hall in the Baron de Clifford's Castle — a large Gothic door*, R. S. E. — *doors*, C. F. *and* L. U. E.

QUICK, SLOW, *and other Domestics, discovered seated at a table*, C., *drinking.*

Omnes. [*Laughing.*] Ha! ha! ha! ha!

Slow. Laugh and jeer, an ye will, ye children of vanity and unbelief! Yet still do I maintain my point, and assert, that this castle hath been haunted by a remarkably tall and beautiful young ghost, of the feminine gender, ever since the mysterious disappearance of our poor young lady, which misfortune happened ten years since this very Christmas. Thou recollectest the circumstance well, brother Quick.

Quick. Aye, marry do I; for, of all the days in the year, we lost the lovely Lady Agnes on Christmas Day, just when we were kissing the pretty girls under the mistletoe bough. [*Smacking his lips.*] God bless 'em!

[*They rise, and come forward.*

Slow. (R. C.) Thou mightest have been kissing the maidens, brother Quick, but not I. The saints preserve me from such ungodliness!

Quick. (L. C.) Why, thou dull, inanimate, senseless lump of clay! Dost dare to insinuate aught against the propriety of kissing the dear, bewitching, delightful creatures? One more such word, and I'll pulverize, annihilate thee on the spot!

Slow. Irritate not thyself, brother Quick, for, verily, it was not mine intention to offend. But, apropos, talking of the ladies, reminds me of our worthy friend, Magister Carolus Crotchet.

Quick. Poor fellow! after the mysterious death of his pupil, the Lady Agnes, he fled the castle, and has not since been heard of.

Slow. Ah! 'twas a melancholy day! I marvel much what hath become of her lover, the brave young Sir Lovel, who, heart-broken at the untimely death of his lady, went forth a crusader to the holy wars. Poor gentleman! he was greatly to be pitied.

Quick. He slumbers, no doubt, ere this, on the bed of glory.

Slow. Stuck through and through, I suppose, by some huge giant of a Saracen. What an honour!

Quick. Which such insensible blockheads as thou art are unable to appreciate. But, talking of the noble young knight, I'll give thee a toast. Here's to the memory of the brave Sir Lovel, living or dead!

Slow. Bravo!—And, slow though I be by name and by nature, yet will I not be slow to answer thy pledge.—Here's to the immortal memory of the brave Sir Lovel!

[*They drink, and chant.*

"For he was a fine old English gentleman,
One of the olden time," &c.

Enter DAME WINNIFRED *and* MAUD, *with lights*, C. D. F.

Dame. (C.) Shame on ye, ye drunken topers, to be carousing at this time of night! To bed—to bed, I say!

Maud. Oh, you incorrigible, sottish knaves! if I were his lordship, I'd have you all clapped in the stocks.

Slow. Bless you, young Mistress Maud, and old Dame Winnifred, we——

Dame. Old!—Why, you monster! where are your eyes? Old, indeed! Well, I like that!

Slow. If so, you have no reason to complain. Bless

you! we are not intoxicated, but simply cogitating on past events

Quick. Nothing more; only enjoying a little rational conversation on a spiritual subject.

Dame. A spiritual subject!

Maud. The very thing for you, dame; for you know you are fond of spirits, and never fail to give all your gossipping acquaintance a *cordial* reception. [*Laughing.*] Ha! ha! ha!

Dame. None of your insinuations, madam, if you please! [*To Slow.*] But, pr'ythee, explain.

Slow. Why, you must know, Dame Winnifred, that this castle is absolutely and bonâ fide haunted by a ghost.

Dame & Maud. [*Alarmed.*] A ghost!

Slow. Ay, marry, and by a remarkably good-looking ghost, of the feminine gender; and no less a ghost than that of our dear young Lady Agnes, whom we lost this very day ten years ago. Nay, start not; for verily do I avow, these eyes have oft beheld her, dressed all in white, wandering through the lonesome towers of this castle;—yea, verily, I swear I have!

Dame & Maud. [*Terrified.*] Mercy on us!

Quick. I'll not credit it;—'tis an idle dream of that super-excellent and double-refined blockhead, Master Slow.

Slow. Scoff, an thou wilt; still I say, the ghost of the fair Lady Agnes haunteth this castle exactly at the midnight hour. [*The castle bell begins to strike twelve.*

Dame. Oh, me! what o'clock is that?

Quick. Twelve. [*A loud knocking heard without.*

Maud. Oh! I am a dead damsel!

Dame. No doubt it is the ghost a-coming!—Oh!

Quick. Open the door, brother Slow!

[*They thrust each other forward.*

Slow. Open the door, brother Quick!

Dame. Open the door, Maud!

Maud. Open the door, dame!

Slow. Open the door, holy St. Dominick!

[*Louder knocking without.*

Enter the BARON DE CLIFFORD *from an inner apartment,* L., *and crosses to* C.

Baron. How now?—What means this strange confusion? Who knocks so loudly at the castle gate?

Slow. A ghost, an't please your noble lordship.

Baron. Fools! idiots!—Open the gate, I say, or dread

my displeasure! [*They still hesitate.*] Is it, then, come to this? Cowards! now must I, your lord and master, set you an example. [*Opens the door*, R. S. E.

Enter KOBO—*the females scream, and run off*, L.

Slow. Avaunt! thou mis-shapen mass of deformity!—Approach him not, my lord;—I know him well: he is an imp of Beelzebub!

Baron. Dolt! hold thy peace!

Quick. But, pr'ythee, brother Slow, how canst thou prove yon page an imp of Satan?

Slow. By an argumentum ad diabolum. It is now ten years since we last saw his face; in all which time, he hath not grown one inch. Young devils never grow.

Quick. Then where the devil do the old ones come from?

Slow. That's no concern of mine.

Baron. [*Aside.*] Now I regard the boy, he does seem, indeed, a most mysterious being. [*Apart to Slow.*] You say he hath not altered in ten years?

Slow. Not an atom, my lord.

Baron. [*To Kobo.*] Speak! I command thee! Or fiend, or human being, what art thou?

Kobo. Doth not your lordship know me? I am Kobo, the favourite page of Sir Reginald de Courcy.

Baron. What is thy errand here?

Kobo. My noble master demands an audience.

Baron. Admit him instantly.

MUSIC.—*Enter* SIR REGINALD DE COURCY, R. D.

Sir R. Save you, my lord!

Slow. Amen! and all of us from the power of Satan!

Baron. Silence, fool! Your business here, my lord.

Sir R. I will impart it, when we are alone. [*To the Domestics.*] Hence, slaves! nor dare to stand eaves-dropping there, and listening to your betters' conversation!

Baron. They are no slaves, my lord, but faithful servants; I pray you, therefore, treat them with due respect.

Sir R. Oh! by all means! [*To the Servants, jeeringly.*] Kind gentlemen, an it please you, pray condescend to leave us for awhile!—Now do—I entreat it as a favour!

Baron. [*To the Servants.*] You may retire awhile.

Kobo. [*Getting behind Slow, and striking him on the shoulder.*] Dost not hear, fellow?—You may go!

Slow. So may you—into the hot kitchen down below!

[*Aside, going.*] Faugh! how terribly he smells of brimstone! [*Exeunt Domestics and Kobo,* L.

Baron. My lord, I suspect the purport of this visit: you are come to claim, by virtue of the mortgage-deed, my forfeit-lands; for to redeem them is not at present in my power.

Sir R. E'en as you have surmised, my lord: I come to take possession of your castle and domains.

Baron. Take all! — Nor wealth, nor titles, now have charms for me, since my dear child — my Agnes, is no more!

Sir R. [*Appalled.*] By all your hopes of heaven, and fear of punishment hereafter, I charge you, mention not again the name of Agnes in my hearing! Desist—desist, I pray you, or you will drive me mad!

Baron. Mysterious raving! what may this import? I, who was father to so sweet a child, can mention her, and dwell upon her name, without this wild commotion of the brain. A tear is all her memory calls forth—a tribute these old eyes do ne'er refuse; yet am I calm. What may have moved you thus, my lord?

Sir R. You know how dearly I did love thy daughter.

Baron. Alas! what was thy love to mine?

Sir R. The mention of her name fills me with horror!

Baron. And me with joy—sad, melancholy joy; for she was always dutiful and good. Look up, Sir Reginald, with me, and pray that we one day may join her, and be as blessed as she now is happy!

Sir R. [*Shuddering.*] No! I dare not!

[*Music.—The venerable Baron invites Sir Reginald to join him in mental prayer, which he refuses—the old man offers up his orisons alone, while De Courcy stands with his eyes rivetted to the ground.*

Baron. My eyes look up for consolation—thine are fixed on earth. Go to! I fear thou art a wicked man!

Sir R. Most worthy sir, my sins, as you observe, are numerous; [*Taking out a purse.*] but, I atone for them in being charitable to the poor. [*Sneeringly.*] Accept this purse, my lord, ere you depart; or, should you please to stay, I will bestow on you the place of steward in my household.

Baron. Unfeeling man! were but this arm as vigorous now as in the days of my youth, I'd quickly make thee rue this insolence! Become a menial in the castle of my

ancestors! Never—never! [*Thunder and rain.*] 'Midst the tempest's fury, I can wander forth a beggar through the world, but never eat the bread of charity from the bounty of such a man as Reginald de Courcy! [*Calling off*, L.] What, ho! my staff and cloak, there, instantly!

Re-enter MAUD, L., *with a cloak and staff.*

Maud. [*Giving them to the Baron.*] Nay, go not forth, my lord, in such a night as this!

Baron. I will—I must, good girl. Sir Reginald hath taken possession of the whole domain, which owned me for its lord. Summon my household—my old and faithful servants; and, ere I depart, I will give them all I possess on earth—a poor man's blessing!

[*Music.—Maud beckons off*, L.

Re-enter DAME WINNIFRED, QUICK, SLOW, *and other Domestics*, L.

Baron. Farewell, my friends—not my servants now! we must part. By virtue of a mortgage-deed, Sir Reginald de Courcy enters into possession of all my property; so take my blessing, and fare you well!

Maud. Rather than lose so good, so kind a master, we all will follow you.

Quick. Ay, every man of us.

Dame. And every woman, too. I'll sell my diamond stomacher, that I will, to raise the money, or a part of it, for such a worthy master.

Maud. And I, with joy, will give the twenty crowns I've saved out of my wages, to buy a husband with; aye, marry will I, and not marry at all.

Quick. And Quick will quickly sell his Sunday coat to——

Slow. [*Taking off his coat.*] And Slow will not be slow in imitating so glorious an example.

Baron. [*Preventing him.*] Desist, my friends—it is in vain! The whole that ye possess would not discharge a tithe of the vast debt I owe De Courcy. 'Tis, therefore, my command you tarry here; that is, if good Sir Reginald will keep you in his service.

Sir R. [*Sneeringly.*] Willingly, if it will gratify your noble lordship.

Baron. Thanks for this act of courtesy! [*Putting on the cloak.*] Upon my pilgrimage, 'twill prove a consolation to my heart to be assured, that my faithful servants are

provided for. Farewell—farewell! and may Heaven bless you!

[*Music.—The Domestics kneel, and the Baron gives them his parting benediction—then, much affected, he kisses the banners of his ancient house—the sorrowing retainers follow him with their eyes, as he slowly retires up the hall—Sir Reginald triumphantly holds up the title deeds, and the scene closes.*

SCENE II.—*A Forest.*

Enter MAGISTER CAROLUS CROTCHET, *as an Esquire to a Knight Crusader*, L.

Cro. Well, thanks to good fortune, a little courage, and a great deal of impudence, here I am once more, safe and sound, after encountering the perils of these nick-named Holy Wars. To think, now, that I, whose very soul was harmony, should ever have had my ears bored with the horrible discord of battle! Oh, 'tis shocking! But how could I leave the brave and unfortunate Sir Lovel, after the loss of his beautiful bride, to wander heaven knows whither, without a brave and courageous esquire like myself to protect him? Poor gentleman! though ten years have elapsed, he still continues as melancholy as a duck in dry weather; while I, spite of the blue devils, am as merry a dog as any in Christendom! [*Sings.*

Home from the wars,
Free from all scars,
With a heart full of pleasure and glee,
Henceforth I'll sing,
Long live the king! [*Dancing grotesquely.*
And music—sweet music for me!

Enter SIR HENRY LOVEL, *as a Knight Crusader*, L.

Lovel. Have with thee! thou art a right merry knave. But wherefore carol forth thy strains here, in the deep recesses of the forest, where thou mayst find, on every bush and tree, a feathered songster to outwarble thee?

Cro. No matter, my lord; sing I must, at all times, and in all places;—for I am by nature of such a merry mood, that I defy a whole legion of blue devils to make me miserable. Why don't your lordship follow my example? Banish this adagio lamentavole from your good-looking countenance, and let a gay and lively presto movement give fire to your eye—joy to your heart!

Lovel. My trusty squire, I envy thee thy happy turn of

mind; but I, alas! have done with smiles for ever. The hapless fate of my beloved Agnes, when, beneath the bough of mistletoe, we parted, never more to meet again, hath poisoned my heart against each source of joy. In the battle-field in vain have I sought death, who, like an arrant coward, fled from me!

Cro. Melancholy and mysterious, indeed; since the only evidence of the death of her dear young ladyship, by drowning, was the bare word of that black, ill-looking gentleman, Sir Reginald de Courcy.

Lovel. Name him not!—The mere recollection of that man fills my mind with horror, yet I know not why.—[*Crossing to* R.] But I must to the village, to dismiss, with largess for their present entertainment, those brave and faithful followers, who so long companioned me in battle. We will then repair to yonder castle, once the dwelling place of my brightest, fondest hopes—my dear, lost Agnes! [*Exit*, R.

Cro. How very touching! aye, and almost as cutting as the edge of my sabre, which whipped off the heads of five and twenty Saracen grenadiers all at a blow! Still can I not be sorrowful for the very soul of me. [*Looking off*, L.] Ah! who comes here? As I live, 'tis my former sweetheart, Miss Maud, and in inexpressibles, too! How inexpressibly mysterious! [*Retires up, and observes her.*

Enter MAUD, L., *in the dress of a young Peasant.*

Maud. Since my venerable master, the Lord de Clifford, refused the offer of my services as a woman, I have assumed this disguise, that, as a guide, I may attend the poor old gentleman, and do my best to shield him from harm. [*Seeing Crotchet.*] Ah! as I live, there stands Master Crotchet, formerly my sweetheart! I'll pretend not to know him. [*Affecting an air of consequence.*]—Save you, young man!—Hem!

Cro. Thank you kindly, young woman!

Maud. Young woman, indeed! Pray, sirrah, what mean you by——

Cro. Calling you what you really are? [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha! Why, you don't think to impose upon me, do you, my dear, by endeavouring to pass for a young man? Bless you, there's nothing at all manly about you.

Maud. Upon my word! it's like your impudence to tell me so!

Cro. Oh, by no means. In the first place, your chin is

as smooth as the palm of my hand—not the least prospect of a beard! Then your form is far too feminine to be masculine; your gait too womanish; your hand too soft; your look too languishing; your lips too full of honey; your eyes too full of fire! And now, having told you what you are not, permit me to inform you what you really are. Why, you cunning little witch! you are all the most fastidious lover could desire—young, lovely, enchanting; in a word, you are my own dear, darling, little Maud!

[*Embraces her.*

Maud. Provoking! to think I should be so soon detected! But, since farther concealment were useless, welcome home again, my dear Crotchet; and learn, that the cause of my assuming this disguise is to guide the wandering footsteps of our venerable master, the Baron de Clifford, who has been dispossessed of all his property—even the roof that sheltered him, by that accomplished villain, Sir Reginald de Courcy.

Cro. The tyrant! what would I not give to send him, presto prestissimo, down to the regions below?

Maud. Hush!—Let us retire a moment; for, see—the aged baron bends his steps this way. [*They retire up.*

MUSIC.—*Enter the* BARON DE CLIFFORD, L., *weary, and supporting himself on his staff.*

Baron. Houseless and friendless, my enfeebled limbs refuse their office, and I sink at last! [*Tottering.*

Maud. [*Coming forward, and supporting him.*] Never, sir, while I have strength to help you.

Baron. Who art thou, boy?

Maud. The brother, sir, of a damsel, who was lately employed in your family; and, for your honour's kindness to my sister, I crave the office of acting as your guide.

Baron. Thou art an honest lad, and I accept thy friendly service.

Cro. [*Coming forward,* R.] And here stands another of your lordship's servants—Carolus Crotchet!

Baron. My Agnes' music-master?—Welcome, friend! But I've no Agnes now! How fares Sir Lovel?

Cro. He lingers on through life, and that is all: anon, he'll visit you at your lordship's castle.

Baron. I have no castle! If he would visit me, tell him, the barren desert is my home—the earth my bed—the heavens my canopy! [*To Maud.*] But, come, lend

me thy arm, good boy !—My eyes are well near blinded by the drifting sand, as I passed o'er the heath.

Cro. They look, indeed, inflamed, and, with your leave, I'll bind them with my kerchief, and then lead you in safety to some hospitable dwelling. [*Binding his eyes—apart to Maud.*] A thought has struck me : we'll conduct his lordship back to the castle, which shall be redeemed, and Reginald de Courcy driven thence. I, and my master, Sir Lovel, are now rich enough to pay ten times the amount of the mortgage : we've not been to the holy wars for nothing. Mother Church is an old lady of such thrifty habits, that whichsoever way the world may run, she always takes good care of number one.

[*Music.—Exeunt Crotchet and Maud, conducting the Baron off*, R.

SCENE III.—*A wild, rocky Retreat, near a gloomy Forest, by Moonlight—a bank under a tree*, R. S. E.

MUSIC.—*Enter* SIR HENRY LOVEL, C.

Lovel. Duty achieved, were the heart well at ease, pleasure and joy might lend their happy aid to while away the hours of idleness in innocent enjoyment ; but the soul that is forsaken by the cherub, Hope, is like the charnel-house —all gloom and horror. One only consolation, balmy Sleep, remains the solace of the broken-hearted.

On yonder bank I'll seek a brief repose,
Dream of my lost Agnes, and forget my woes !

[*He reclines on the bank*, R. S. E.] My Agnes' spirit seems to hover o'er me ; my senses sink in sweet oblivion ; my eyes refuse to gaze upon the stars, that mock them with their brilliancy ! [*Music.—He sleeps.*

THE SPIRIT OF AGNES *is seen gliding through the trees from* L. U. E.—*it approaches Lovel, and, thrice bending silently over him, invokes a benediction, and imprints a fond kiss upon his forehead.*

The Spirit of Agnes. [*Through soft and solemn music.*]

Welcome, dear Lovel, at Christmas tide !
Welcome once more to thy murder'd bride !
'Twas hard on my wedding-night to die !
You sought me low, and you sought me high ;
But you sought me not in the old oak chest,
Wherein I had hidden, in sport and in jest.

Sir Reginald murder'd me—horrible doom!
By clasping the lid of my living tomb!
A mouldering skeleton there I lie,—
'Twas hard on my wedding-night to die!
Still welcome, dear Lovel, at Christmas tide!
Welcome once more to thy murder'd bride!

[*She vanishes slowly*, R. U. E., *as the music dies away.*
—*Distant thunder—wild, hurried music.*

Lovel. [*Awaking, and starting up in fearful agitation.*] Stay—stay! ecstatic vision! [*Rushing forward aghast*, C.] Vanish not, but bless me again with an ethereal kiss from those beloved lips! Gone! 'Twas but a dream! And yet the tale of horror her words imparted——My Agnes murdered—and by Sir Reginald? Accursed fiend! Oh, may I trace the viper to his nest! then, if I crush him not, may the wronged spirit of my beauteous bride allow not my tardy soul one moment's respite! On, Lovel, on! for Agnes and revenge! [*Exit, hurriedly*, L.

SCENE IV.—*An Ante-Chamber in the Castle.*

Enter MAUD, R.

Maud. Thanks to the superior genius of my dear Crotchet, we have succeeded in decoying back our venerable master to the castle of his ancestors; and till our projects are ripe, his lordship has prudently consented to remain concealed in the oratory. There's not the least danger of Sir Reginald discovering him; for he never goes to prayer, unless to summon to his aid the evil spirit whom he serves. Oh, dear! the very thought of such a personage is enough to frighten a young damsel, even though she may strut about in inexpressibles, out of her seventeen senses!

[*Exit, running*, C. F.

Enter CROTCHET, R., *meeting* QUICK *and* SLOW, L.

Cro. Ah! old Slow-and-sure! and my old friend, Nimbletoe! How d'ye do?

Quick. What, friend Crotchet! is that you?

Cro. Ay, marry is it; just returned from the holy wars, where I have seen such sights! such dreadful cutting-up and slaughtering!

Slow. Mercy!—Pr'ythee, tell us all about it.

Cro. There was—at the battle of Ascalon, for example. I was exceedingly well armed; my sabre was sharp enough

to shave the great Mogul, without so much as tickling his chin; and in my hand a lance I bore, full five-and-forty feet in length, on which, in the heat of the engagement, I skewered, like so many sparrows on a spit, no less than three dozen Saracens! The sultan, witnessing the tremendous execution I was bravely dealing among his troops, came rushing down like a fury upon me; but I, nothing daunted, drew my trusty sword, and, with one desperate blow—thus—[*Flourishing his sword.*] sent his head spinning off his shoulders like a top! When it had been spinning three quarters of an hour, it began to roll, and rolled and rolled away, and never stopped——

Slow & Quick. Never stopped!

Cro. Never, till it reached the market-place in the city of Aleppo—two hundred and fifty leagues from the field of battle!

Slow. Incredible!

Cro. What! darest thou, grovelling worm, to doubt the truth of my narration? Doubt, if thou wilt, that men walk on their feet, and not their heads; doubt that woman's tongue was made for talking; doubt what thou wilt, but never dare to question the known veracity of Magister Carolus Crotchet!—Ahem!

[*Exit, consequentially,* L., *followed by the Domestics.*

SCENE V.—*The Armoury of the Castle by Moonlight—banners hung against the walls, the old oak chest, &c., as in Act I., Scene V.—a table and lamp, near* L. U. E.

SIR REGINALD DE COURCY *discovered sitting thoughtfully near the table.*

Sir R. [*Rising, and coming slowly forward,* C.] Ere now I have seen a beggar eat his crust, and smile:—the needy fare he fed upon was, by contentment, more richly spiced, than are the racy viands that court my pampered appetite. The bugbear, Conscience, scares pleasure from my heart, sleep from mine eye, and hope, the wretch's solace, from my soul. Ten years have now elapsed since, in you chest, the loveliest form by nature ever moulded was barbarously, by this murderous hand, shut in a living tomb. Still her remains lie mouldering there. That chest must be removed—not opened, for the world! The sight of it doth freeze my soul with horror! [*Calling.*] What, ho! where art thou, Kobo?

MUSIC.—*Enter* KOBO, *with a lighted torch*, R.

Kobo. Here, my lord, ready and ripe for mischief: what wouldst thou have me do? The corn-fields laugh in the moonlight joyfully—the golden harvest waits but for the reaper: say, shall I fire the grain, and blast his hopes? Do give me leave;—'twould make a glorious blaze!—[*Laughing hideously.*] Ha, ha! ho, ho! 'Tis done—'tis done, my lord! [*Rushes towards* R. U. E.

Sir R. Malicious fiend! forbear!

Kobo. [*Returning, brandishing the torch.*] Fire is my element: speak but the word, and all around shall be one vast volcano! [*Rushing off again.*

Sir R. Stay, imp of mischief!—Rash fool! wouldst beggar me? The corn-fields all are mine! Throw hence that torch, and do thy master's bidding.

Kobo. I will, my lord; because I must obey.

[*Puts the torch aside.*

Sir R. Try if thou hast strength enough to remove yon chest, with its contents, and hurl it into the stream that laves our castle's base.

Kobo. [*Endeavouring to remove it.*] 'Tis ponderous, as though 'twere full of gold. Mayhap the old baron concealed his treasures there. I have the key, and will examine it. [*Hurried Music.—He is about to open the chest.*

Sir R. [*Drawing a dagger, and rushing ferociously towards him.*] Back, imp! nor dare to ope that chest!—Make but the attempt again, and, fiend though thou art, hadst thou ten thousand lives, I'd strike thee dead!—Give me the key, nor think to unveil such horrors to mine eye! [*Hurling him from the chest.*] Back—back! I say! [*Knocking heard*, R. S. E.] Go, slave, and see who knocks. [*Music.—Exit Kobo, with his torch*, R. S. E.

Re-enter KOBO, *lighting in the* BARON DE CLIFFORD *and* SIR HENRY LOVEL.

Sir R. (L.) [*Starting in alarm.*] You here, Sir Lovel! and the baron, too!

Enter CROTCHET, *secretly*, L. U. E.

Lovel. E'en as you see; yet whence this perturbation? You seem amazed, my lord.

Sir R. [*Hesitatingly.*] Not in the least; I—merely felt surprised, that—at so late an hour—you——

Kobo. [*Running officiously to Sir Reginald, and interrupting him.*] My lord, shall I bring refreshment for your

noble visitors? [*Apart to him.*] I'll drug the wine for them!

Sir R. Do so, good Kobo. [*Apart.*] Any thing to rid me of such unwelcome guests! [*Kobo runs off*, L. U. E.

Cro. [*Aside.*] Thou imp of Satan!—But I'll watch thy motions! [*Exit after Kobo*, L. U. E.

[*Sir Reginald stands absorbed in thought*, L.

Baron. [*Aside, regarding him attentively.*] It must be so!—His quivering lip is blanched with fear, the sure criterion of a guilty conscience!

Sir R. [*Abstractedly.*] I do bethink me now of the prophecy of the Arab sorceress, who, on the plains of Ispahan, predicted that I should die this very night. 'Tis Christmas night—ten years since Agnes' murder! [*Starting.*] Hence, Conscience! thou tantalising fiend! hence, I say!

Lovel. [*Apart to the Baron.*] Marked you his words, my lord? We boldly now may tax him with the deed.

Re-enter KOBO, *with wine*, L. U. E., *followed and watched by* CROTCHET.

Sir R. Wine, Kobo! wine for my honoured guests!—Let us drink to the memory of the Lady Agnes!

Baron. [*Aside.*] Oh, hardened miscreant!

[*Music.—Kobo, narrowly watched by Crotchet, hands the poisoned goblet to Sir Lovel.*

Lovel. [*Taking the wine.*] Should the foul fiend himself propose so dear a pledge, I'd honour it in a bumper!

[*He is about to drink.*

Cro. [*Advancing, and preventing him.*] Hold! drink not, my lord—the wine is poisoned! I saw it done by that young imp of Beelzebub, the beautiful page of Sir Reginald de Courcy! [*Chord.*

Sir R. Slave! liar!

Cro. No calling names, my lord; or, by St. George, and the dragon to boot, I'll tickle your right honourable ribs for you with this good sword of mine, a la prestissimo furioso, in first-rate opera style!

Lovel. [*Dashing away the goblet.*] And had I even drunk of the poisoned wine, and fallen his victim, 'twould not have been the first murder committed by Sir Reginald de Courcy.

Sir R. How, sir!

Lovel. Nay, think not that I do mince my words. I

repeat, thou art a murderer—the murderer of my dear, beloved bride, the Lady Agnes!

CHORD. — *Enter* DAME WINNIFRED, QUICK, SLOW, MAUD, *and numerous Male and Female Domestics, Vassals, &c.,* R. *and* L.

Sir R. Blood only shall wash out this calumny! Who dare accuse me of the crime of murder?

Lovel. Within this hour, the sainted spirit of my murdered Agnes appeared before mine eyes, and, in a vision, charged thee with the deed.

Sir R. How! — A spirit my accuser? [*Laughing.*] Ha, ha, ha!

Baron. Triumph not, but boldly stand the ordeal of knighthood. Old as I am, I dare thee to the combat!

Lovel. Nay, good my lord, think you Sir Lovel could stand tamely by, and see another avenge the cause of her he loved dearer than life itself? [*Drawing.*] Defend thyself, Sir Reginald!—If thy soul be free from guilt, thou canst have nought to fear. Come on, and Heaven protect the right!

Sir R. Agreed! [*Drawing.*] Advance!

Lovel. For Agnes and revenge! [*Music.*

COMBAT.

[*During the fight, Kobo repeatedly endeavours to get behind Sir Lovel, and stab him in the back, but is prevented by Crotchet, who narrowly watches his motions—Sir Reginald is at length disarmed, and falls.*

Lovel. [*Standing over him with his sword at his throat.*] Arise, Lord De Courcy, and take from me thy life—if such a life as thine be worth the having!

Sir R. [*Rising.*] Thou art the better swordsman, Sir Lovel; but that proves neither guilt nor innocence.

Lovel. There's yet another proof. In yonder chest still lie the mouldering remains of my murdered Agnes. Nay, start not! If thou art innocent, open it; gaze on her skeleton, and from her brow take off the rosy chaplet which she wore upon her bridal morn.

Sir R. [*Aside.*] I'd rather meet death in any shape!—Yet, if I hesitate, they'll stamp me guilty. [*To Sir Lovel, falteringly.*] With all my heart, my lord. I—I am prepared. Why need I fear—a—mouldering skeleton? —

[*Calling.*] Hoa, Kobo! a cup of wine! [*Drinking.*] I'm ready! Ope the chest!

Kobo. [*Endeavouring to hide the key.*] The key is lost.

Cro. [*Snatching it from him.*] Not so—the key is found.

[*Music.—Crotchet opens the chest, and all whom curiosity have attracted to the spot start back with horror on beholding the skeleton.*

Lovel. The vision was too true! Oh, awful fate! my bride lay clasped in a living tomb!

Baron. My poor, ill-fated child!

Lovel. Approach, Sir Reginald—behold thy victim!—Approach, I say, and prove thine innocence!

Sir R. [*Aside.*] It shall be so! Courage, De Courcy!

[*Music. — He approaches and retreats alternately, and, after a violent struggle with his feelings, bends tremblingly, with half-averted face, over the chest, and takes from thence the bridal wreath.*

Sir R. [*Coming forward, triumphantly.*] Behold the wreath!—Who dare accuse me now?

[*A loud crash—thunder and lightning.*

THE SPIRIT OF LADY AGNES *suddenly appears*, C. F.

The Spirit. I dare! — Sir Reginald de Courcy is my murderer!

Sir R. Hence, horrible phantom! hence! I do confess the deed, and thus I make atonement for my crime!

[*Stabs himself, and dies.*

[*Soft Music.—The Spirit ascends in ethereal fire, appeased and smiling on the astonished group, who form a tableau as the curtain descends.*

DISPOSITION OF THE CHARACTERS AT THE FALL OF THE CURTAIN.

Vassals.		*Domestics.*
LOVEL.	*Body of*	BARON.
SLOW.	SIR REGINALD	QUICK.
CROTCHET.	DE COURCY.	KOBO.
MAUD.		DAME
R.]		[L.

THE END.